



Administrative Policies and Procedures: 16.4

Subject:	Resource Home Approval
Authority:	TCA 36-1-101 – 142, 36-1-201, 37-4-201 et seq., 37-5-105, 37-5-106, Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006 HR 4472, Adoption and Safe Families, P.L. 109-239, Safe and Timely Interstate Placement Act of Children in Foster Care Act of 2006 - P.L. 109-239, and the Social Security Act
Standards:	DCS 2-501, 2-502, 2-503, 2-602, 3-301, 3-102, 3-200, 3-201, 3-203, 3-204, 6-102, 6-200, 6-301, 6-505 B, 6-509 C, 6-513 C, 7-200 A, 7-203 A
Application:	DCS Foster Care Staff and Supervisory Staff

Policy Statement:

The TN Department of Children's Services (DCS) will accept applications from persons eighteen (18) years of age or older, married or single, who have been a legal resident of Tennessee for at least six (6) months regardless of gender, race, color, or national origin, who wish to become a resource parent. Approval is a mutual selection process and will be based on the applicant's ability to meet specific approval requirements and the applicant's ability to promote the department's Standards of Professional Practice.

TN Department of Children's Services or a DCS Private Provider will also accept a referral/request on an identified TN resident submitted in compliance with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) as an application to become a resource parent/home for a specific child and apply this policy accordingly.

Purpose:

If a child/youth must be separated from their family, DCS is committed to place children/youth with families capable of meeting their needs. It is also committed to making every effort to ensure prospective resource parents are able to provide safety, permanency and well-being and that these persons are fully prepared to serve in this capacity. Serving as a resource parent for children in Tennessee is a privilege.

Procedures:

A. DCS Response to Prospective Resource Parents	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. All inquiries received should be responded to within seven (7) working days.2. Resource home referrals submitted to the Region through the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) should be contacted or otherwise responded to by the assigned home study writer within five (5) working days of receipt of the referral.3. Staff who respond to inquiries or referrals will give interested families an overview of resource parenting, the home study process and approval requirements.
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The documentation of the contact will be entered into the Resource Home Section of TN Kids. DCS or Private Provider staff are responsible to assist families in completing their application and with initial paperwork during the Parents as Tender Healers (PATH) intake session. The vast majority of children who enter the guardianship of the State of Tennessee are adopted by their foster parents and the Department wants to maintain that stability for children who cannot return home. Therefore, families who express a desire only to adopt a child should be given a list of Providers who can better serve their needs.
B. Intake and Parents as Tender Healers (PATH) Schedule	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> At a minimum, each DCS Region should schedule and implement at least one PATH Course no less than one time per month. Private Providers should offer Intake meetings as often as necessary to maintain a pool of families sufficient to meet their contract requirements.
C. Home Study Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The home study process will begin at session 1 of PATH with the collection of the Resource Family Application for Parenting, CS-0688, the Authorization for Release of Information to DCS, CS-0668 and the initial paperwork distributed during the Intake meeting. The home study writer must conduct at least four (4) planned interviews with the prospective resource parents, (three (3) if a single applicant), including one (1) home consultation, and individual interviews with each applicant. The interview process should begin immediately following PATH session three. Documentation of contacts by the home study writer identifying the progress of and status of the study process will be entered on the Resource Home Recording, form CS-0709 throughout the home study process and summarized in the home study narrative. Each resource parent applicant and each member of the family must provide a medical report from a licensed physician, nurse practitioner, or equivalent health care professional, verifying/attesting to good physical and emotional health of all household members, including freedom from communicable diseases. The Resource Parent Medical Report, CS-0678, may be used to document the applicant's current medical status, as well as other adult household members. The Child's Medical Record, CS 0427, may be used to document the current medical status of children living in the home. Note: In cases where a child has had a physical examination for school, well-baby checks etc., within the last 12 months, the applicants may submit the documentation from that appointment, provided it speaks to the child being free of communicable disease. Verifications of valid driver's license, current marriage, any previous marriage annulments/divorces, births, adoptions and custody matters of children in the home, if applicable, must be provided. If the applicant is married, both members of the couple must be a party to the study process. Note: Copies of valid driver's license must be obtained for any household

	<p>member who might transport a child in care.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. References must be obtained from three (3) individuals not related to the applicants, as well as one (1) relative reference from each of the applicants. The individuals providing references may not reside in the home of the applicants. 7. A decision regarding the home study should be made within ninety (90) days of the applicant's completion of PATH and any additional required pre-service training for applicants to private provider agencies. In cases of <u>ICPC</u>, the decision regarding the home study should be made within sixty (60) working days of the date of the referral. 8. If approved, DCS/private provider staff shall: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Notify the applicants in writing using the Resource Parent Approval, CS-0702, b) Enter the resource family into the ChiPFinS data system (DCS Only, excluding ICPC cases), c) Ensure the new resource home is entered into the resource home section of TN KIDS, including ICPC resource homes, d) Add the family onto the regional resource home list, including ICPC resource homes, and e) Submit information to Resource Exchange for Adoptable Children in Tennessee (REACT) database on any family including ICPC resources, whose home was approved. 9. If a resource family is denied the procedures outlined in DCS Policy 16.16 Denial or Closure of Resource Homes must be followed.
D. Mandatory Pre-Service Training	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PATH should be co-lead by a DCS or private provider staff person and a trained resource parent. 2. All resource parent applicants and/or any adults living in the household having a significant parenting role, must complete an Intake session and twenty-seven (27) hours of PATH training. 3. Medication Administration, Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and First Aid training will be required of all applicants as a part of the approval process once capacity for training delivery is established within the Department. Applicants will be informed when this requirement takes effect, however potential resource parents and are encouraged to obtain this training in the community. 4. Older birth or adopted children, who are living in the home of the resource parents that turn eighteen (18) years old after the parents are approved, will not have to complete Parents as Tender Healers (PATH), unless they will have a significant parenting role. 5. Families who have been approved in the past two (2) years, were closed in good standing, and can provide documentation of PATH completion (or it's equivalent i.e. MAPP, PRIDE etc.), will not routinely have to repeat the PATH training requirement.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. In cases where PATH will not be required, staff are to follow the procedure in section H of this policy and ensure all other assessment criteria are met. 7. In ICPC cases where the placement resource resides in TN and is a parent or stepparent to the child, the PATH training requirement, is waived, however all other requirements must be fulfilled
E. General Areas of Assessment	<p>During the home study the writer will assess at least the following areas with the applicants:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All areas outlined in DCS Policy 16.3, Desired Characteristics of Resource Parents, 2. Understanding of core components of PATH; and 3. Parenting strengths and abilities, 4. Resource home capacity (See DCS policy 16.10, Foster Home Capacity), 5. During the home consultation, the writer must also assess safety and risk documenting whether the prospective residence meets acceptable sanitary requirements utilizing the Home Safety Checklist, CS-0676. Although this may not be a comprehensive list, areas such as the following will be assessed: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Physical facilities must meet the needs of children based on age, gender, sibling group status, and any other special needs. b) The residence is free of hazards, c) Adequate water supply, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Applicants who rely on well water will need to provide documentation of its safety. d) Toilet facilities, e) A working landline telephone, f) Sewage disposal, g) Adequate sleeping space, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Unfinished attics, basements, hallways, or other outbuildings may not be used as sleeping rooms. ◆ Children should have their own bed. ◆ It is preferable that no more than two (2) children share a sleeping room. Exceptions may be granted, in writing, by the Team Leader, if it becomes necessary for more than two (2) children to share a sleeping room. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exceptions in ICPC cases must be communicated/negotiated by the DCS Team Leader with the Sending State equivalent and recorded in writing as part of the FSW and the ICPC record. ◆ Children three (3) years of age or older may not share the bedroom of the resource parent(s) except for brief periods of illness or emotional distress.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Children of the opposite sex shall not be allowed to share sleeping rooms, except in the case siblings where all siblings are <u>age four (4) years old or under</u>. h) Adequate storage space, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Individual space must be provided for each child's personal possessions. i) Adequate pest control. <p>6. All family pets must be vaccinated and documentation must be provided to verify that the vaccination is current.</p> <p>7. The exterior of the residence must also be inspected for hazards.</p> <p>8. All firearms, bows and arrows, hunting knives, and weapons of any variety must be secured and locked in a secure gun cabinet or other storage facility. Gun cabinets with glass enclosures or glass doors are not appropriate, unless specifically designed for the purpose of weapons display. Keys to the gun cabinet must be secured in a separate location. Trigger locks must be utilized on all firearms. Ammunition must be stored and locked separately.</p> <p>9. Swimming pools must be secured in accordance with city/county safety ordinances.</p>
F. Fire Safety	<p>1. Prior to approval, resource homes must have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) UL-approved, operational smoke detectors on every level of the home, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Smoke detectors where children sleep are to be located in the child's bedroom, or in the hallway near to the child's bedroom. b) A functioning fire extinguisher for each floor of the residence. <p>2. Applicants must prepare a floor plan of their home which identifies the location of all smoke detectors and fire extinguishers and illustrates evacuation routes in case there is a fire in the home. This plan should be posted in a prominent location once the home is approved.</p> <p>3. The home study writer can provide any needed assistance to create the floor plan and should discuss a fire drill plan with the applicants during the home study process. The fire drill plan discussion may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) How fire drills might be conducted in the family home, b) How each family member would be made aware of the plan, c) The location where all families members would meet after the home is evacuated, d) Emergency phone numbers and e) How family members with special needs might be assisted.
G. Assessment of	<p>1. The home study writer must assess the quality of an applicant's current and</p>

Relationships	<p>past relationships and their ability to build and maintain trusting and stable relationships with persons including their own children, family members, friends, and others significant to the applicant by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Reading the resource parent's autobiography, Discussions in PATH and/or review of the PATH trainer's summary, Face to face interviews, and Contacting the references. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Significant relationships should be assessed based on duration as well as the number or relationships over time. A conversation should be held with each member of the household to assess their attitude about sharing their home with children from the child welfare system. A summary of these conversations must be documented in the home study narrative.
H. Background and Criminal Records Clearance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> All adult household members must complete an <i>Authorization for Release of Information to DCS, CS-0668</i> by the conclusion of the first PATH session and the criminal background checks must begin immediately following PATH session 1. A criminal background check to include local records, TBI/FBI fingerprinting, an internet records check, and a DCS records review must be completed on each applicant, as well as any other adult member of the household, and documented in the resource home case record. If a prospective resource parent has not been in residence in the county for a period of five (5) years any criminal record must be determined by a record check in his or her current place of residence and previous places of residence of no less than five (5) years back. No applicant may be approved or waiver request made for anyone who has a <u>felony conviction</u> involving: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Child Abuse or Neglect; Spousal Abuse; A crime against a child or children (Including Child Pornography); or A crime involving violence including rape, sexual assault, or homicide, but not including other physical assault or battery. No applicant may be approved or waiver request made for anyone who has been convicted of any of the following felonies in the last five years: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Physical Assault; Battery; or A drug related offense Persons with <i>other</i> types of criminal charges may be considered. In those situations, the Director of Foster Care and Adoptions/designee may grant a

	<p>waiver prior to approval of the resource parents. Such waiver must be thoroughly documented, signed, and filed in the resource home file.</p> <p>7. Private Providers conducting home studies with families who wish to parent a child in the custody/guardianship of DCS, must make any waiver request to the Director of Foster Care and Adoptions/designee.</p> <p>8. In cases of ICPC, the home study writer must make any waiver request specific to the child and family being studied, to the Director of Foster Care and Adoptions/designee. Any waiver requests and responses are to be filed in the resource home case file with a copy retained in the TN ICPC record.</p> <p>9. An Internet Records Clearance, CS- 0687, must be completed for all household members age eighteen (18) years or older which includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) A Methamphetamine Offender Registry Clearance must be conducted for the prospective caregiver(s) and all adult household members using the Internet. The Internet Website address is: http://www.tennesseeanytime.org/methor b) A state and national Sexual Offender Registry Clearance must be conducted for the prospective caregiver(s) and all adult household members using the Internet. The Website address for a TN search is: http://www.ticic.state.tn.us/SEX_ofndr/search_short.asp. The Internet Web site address for a national search is: http://www.nsopr.gov/ c) A TN Felony Offender Database Clearance must be conducted for the prospective caregiver(s) and all adult household members using the Internet. The Website address is http://www.tennesseeanytime.org/foil/search.jsp. d) An Abuse Registry Clearance must be completed for the prospective caregiver(s) and all adult household members using the Internet. The Website address is http://www2.state.tn.us/health/AbuseRegistry/index.html <p>9. A TNKids person search and an inquiry to the Social Service Management System (SSMS) must be completed to determine if there is a past Child Protective Service (CPS) indication for any household member. If a record is found, it must be reviewed, statewide, to assess the finding. Any involvement related to allegations of abuse or neglect must be considered in the assessment/home study process. If the applicant is an indicated perpetrator of sexual or severe physical abuse, approval will not be granted.</p> <p>10. Older birth or adopted children, who are living in the home of the resource parents that turn eighteen (18) years old <u>after</u> the parents are approved, will have to have all criminal and background clearances, including fingerprints, within six (6) months of their eighteenth birthday. Any home with adult children residing in the home who have not completed the background checks will not maintain approved status.</p>
I. Modification or Waiver of Requirements for	<p>1. Although there can be no changes to the <i>PATH curriculum</i>, DCS staff and/or Private Provider staff must obtain approval, in writing, from the Director of Foster Care and Adoptions/designee if any of the following PATH training</p>

<p>Approval of Resource Home</p>	<p><i>formats</i> are needed to better meet the needs of the family:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Use of PATH training with one individual, rather than in a larger, group format. b) Substitution of other approved training and past fostering experiences accepted as PATH equivalent. <p>2. In very limited situations where the safety or well being of the child is not compromised, resource parent requirements (issues related to the home etc.) may be modified. All requests for waivers or modifications to the resource home approval policy requirements, must be submitted in writing to the Director of the Foster Care and Adoption/designee.</p> <p>3. Documentation of any authorization to modify or to waive any requirements outlined in this policy or procedure, must be maintained in the resource family case file and sent to the Office of the Director of Foster Care and Adoption..</p> <p>4. In cases of ICPC, copies of any waivers to modify any portion of PATH or the approval requirements and authorizations must be submitted to the Director of Foster Care and Adoptions/designee. Any waiver requests and responses are to be filed in the resource home case file with a copy retained in the TN ICPC record.</p>
<p>J. Documentation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The entire resource home study record, including the application, autobiography, all PATH forms, and all supporting documentation (medical statements, criminal background checks/clearances, references, etc.) constitutes a completed study. This collection of information must become a part of the resource home case file, along with the home study writer's recommendation, and submitted to the Supervisor and Team Coordinator by the staff person completing the home study. The entire resource home study record will be for reviewed for approval or denial. Private provider agency's home studies must also have two levels of supervisory review/approval. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A resource home study completed in response to an ICPC request must be child-specific to each child/youth identified on the <i>Interstate Compact Placement Request (100A), CS-0525</i> and include a statement regarding the certification of the resource home as eligible under TN DCS standards for federal IV-E financial assistance. 2. All completed home study narratives must include a recommendation statement that clearly defines the age range, number and gender of children for which the family is approved to parent. The recommendation statement must also include information regarding the type of physical, emotional, behavioral, and personality qualities of children the family will be most successful in parenting. 3. It must be documented, in the resource home record, that the discipline policy has been explained, and that the applicants agree to the discipline policy guidelines by signing the <i>Discipline Policy, CS-0553</i>. 4. All applicants must agree to and sign an <i>Oath to Report Child Abuse or Neglect and Abide by the Child Safety Restraint Laws, CS-0670, and an</i>

	<p>Oath of Confidentiality, CS-0673, prior to approval.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. The resource home record must contain a Resource Parent Approval, CS-0702 which indicates the number and type of children for whom the home is approved as well as the approval date. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The resource parent approval for a resource home studied under compliance with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children must also include a statement regarding approval of the specific child/youth identified in the ICPC documents and include a statement regarding the certification of the resource home as eligible under TN DCS standards for federal IV-E financial Assistance. 6. DCS/Private Provider staff may not approve any applications that do not meet the standards outlined in this policy and DCS Policy 16.3, Desired Characteristics of Resource Parents. 7. The home study writer must ensure that the family is entered into the Resource Exchange for Adoptable Children in Tennessee (REACT), once the family is approved. 8. If the potential resource parent is not approved, the procedures outlined in DCS Policy 16.16 Denial or Closure of Resource Homes must be followed.
K. Home Study Maintenance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Once an applicant is approved as a resource family, the resource home study record must be maintained in accordance with DCS Policy 16.23, Resource Home Case Files 2. In order to remain approved the resource family must maintain compliance with DCS Policy 16.8, Responsibilities of Approved Resource Parents and all other DCS policy.
L. Types of Resource Homes Defined	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Once all the above requirements are met an approved resource family is permitted to accept placements for kinship care, foster care, or adoption. 2. An approved resource family may also parent children who are adjudicated delinquent, provided they complete the specialized training requirements outlined in DCS Policy 16.8, Responsibilities of Approved Resource Parents. 3. An approved resource family may also be considered to serve as respite, mentoring, transportation, visitation, or other resource services deemed necessary by DCS. 4. Anyone who applies to become a resource parent after the effective date of this policy and wish to provide therapeutic care or care for medically fragile children should make application to a private provider, unless an arrangement can be made in compliance with DCS Policy 16.11, Shared Resource Homes.

Forms:	<p><u>CS- 0688 – Resource Parent Application for Parenting</u></p> <p><u>CS-0690 - Resource Home Study and Verifications Checklist</u></p> <p><u>CS-0668 - Authorization for Release of information</u> (for all adults in the home)</p> <p><u>CS-0691 - Fingerprint Card Information</u></p> <p><u>CS-0687 - Internet Records Clearance</u> (for all adults in the home)</p> <p><u>CS-0676 - Home Safety Checklist</u></p> <p><u>CS- 0431 - Monthly Income & Expenditures Form</u></p> <p><u>CS-0687 – Resource Parent Medical Report</u> (for all adults in the home)</p> <p><u>CS 0427 – Child's Medical Record</u> (for all children in the home)</p> <p><u>CS-0673 - Oath of Confidentiality</u></p> <p><u>CS-0670 - Oath to Report Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect and to Abide by Child Safety Restraint Laws</u></p> <p><u>CS-0553 – Discipline Policy</u></p> <p><u>CS-0709, - Resource Home Recording</u></p> <p><i>Eco Map</i></p> <p><i>Parenting Strengths Checklist</i></p> <p><u>CS- 0697 - REACT Family Entry Form</u></p> <p><u>Substitute W-9 Form</u></p> <p><u>CS-0702 - Resource Parent Approval</u></p> <p><u>Note: Private Provider Agencies may use equivalent forms, provided the content of the forms capture the content of the forms listed above.</u></p>
Collateral Documents:	<p><i>Results from Police Records Checks</i></p> <p><i>Reference Letters</i></p> <p><i>Proof of all sources of income</i></p> <p><i>Autobiography for each applicant</i></p> <p><i>Individual Interview (Work Aid)</i></p> <p><i>Resource Parent Home Study Outline (Work Aid)</i></p> <p><i>SAFE Family Home Study Outline (Work Aid – Only in pilot areas)</i></p>